

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4723

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1039

WHITE HOUSE FOR VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE--CAPT. HOWE.

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (NROCKEFELLER) PINS SN

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON GOS WIVES

REF: STATE 049557

FOLLOWING IS BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION REQUESTED REFTEL
ON WIVES OF TOP GOS OFFICIALS :

1. MRS. BENJAMIN H. SHEARES, MARRIED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF SINGAPORE SINCE 1939, WAS BORN IN CHINA IN 1917. SHE
CAME TO SINGAPORE IN 1938 AFTER RECEIVING LIBERAL ARTS
DEGREE FROM CHUNG SHAN UNIVERSITY IN CANTON. ENTERED
TRAINING AS MIDWIFE AND NURSE IN OBSTETRICS AND
CYNÆCOLOGY UNIT OF KANDANG KERBAU MATERNITY HOSPITAL,
WHERE SHE MET HUSBAND WHO WAS HEAD OF OBGYN UNIT AT TIME.

THEY HAVE TWO SONS AND ONE DAUGHTER, ALL NOW GROWN, AND
FIVE GRANDCHILDREN. DAUGHTER IS ART CURATOR OF THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM. BOTH SONS EDUCATED IN ENGLAND, ELDER SON
RECEIVED MEDICAL DEGREE FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND
IS NOW PRACTICING MEDICINE IN SINGAPORE. MRS. SHEARES
HAS SERENE, DIGNIFIED BEARING AND A CLASSIC WELL-PRESERVED
BEAUTY. AN AVID READER, ESPECIALLY OF CHINESE HISTORY, FABLES
AND LEGENDS, SHE ENJOYS DISCUSSING ALL TYPES OF LITERATURE.
OTHER HOBBIES ARE GARDENING, PARTICULARLY RAISING ORCHIDS AND
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FRUIT TREES, AND FLOWER ARRANGING. SHE DISLIKES TRAVELLING,

WHETHER OFFICIAL OR PLEASURE, AND SELDOM LEAVES SINGAPORE. SHE SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH, MANDARIN AND MALAY.

2. MRS. LEE KUAN YEW, ADDRESSED AS MRS. LEE, HAS BEEN MARRIED TO THE PRIME MINISTER SINCE 1950. A BRILLIANT STUDENT, MRS LEE WON A QUEEN'S SCHOLARSHIP TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY IN 1947 WHERE SHE WAS A CLASSMATE OF AND COURTED BY PRIME MINISTER LEE. FINISHING THE COURSE IN TWO YEARS, WITH FIRST CLASS HONORS, SHE BEEN PRACTICING LAW IN SINGAPORE SINCE 1950. SHE RUNS FAMILY LAW OFFICE, LEE & LEE, IN WHICH SHE IS PARTNER, ALONG WITH LEE KIM YEW, BROTHER OF THE PM. LEES HAVE TWO SONS, ONE DAUGHTER. ELDER SON IS AN OUTSTANDING MATHEMATICS SCHOLAR, CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES. DAUGHTER IS A BRILLIANT MEDICAL STUDENT AND TOPPED UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE'S FIRST PROFESSIONAL SURGERY EXAM LAST YEAR. YOUNGEST SON RECENTLY COMPLETED JUNIOR COLLEGE LEVEL AND IS ALSO NOTED FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. MRS. LEE IS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE AT LEAST AS BRILLIANT AS HER HUSBAND, IS ONE OF HIS CHIEF POLITICAL ADVISERS, AND MORE THAN AN OCCASIONAL SOURCE OF POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH HER WIDE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS. SHE HAS LITTLE TIME FOR HOBBIES, BUT HAS BROAD INTELLECTUAL INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY HISTORY AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS. QUITE RESERVED IN PUBLIC, PREFERRING TO ESCHEW THE LIMELIGHT, SHE NEVERTHELESS CAN BE FRIENDLY, EVEN CHATTY, AND HAS BEEN KNOWN TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN MIXED GROUP POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS AT PARTIES. MRS. LEE SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH, SEVERAL CHINESE DIALECTS, MALAY.

3. MRS. ALICE GOH KENG SWEE, ADDRESSED AS MRS. GOH, WIFE OF DEPUTY OF PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE GOH KENG SWEE, IS A QUIET AND EARNEST WOMAN WHO HAS WORKED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS. KNOWN AS A DEDICATED CIVIL SERVANT WITH A VERY LOW PUBLIC PROFILE, MRS. GOH IS AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AT THE DEPARTMENT IN CHARGE OF CHILD CARE CENTERS AND CRECHES. HER ENTIRE CAREER HAS BEEN SPENT IN ADMINISTRATION OF PROFESSIONAL CHILD CARE. SHE HAS ONE SON, AND IS A

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GRANDMOTHER. MRS. GOH DOES NOT OFTEN ACCOMPANY HER HUSBAND ON OFFICIAL SOCIAL FUNCTIONS, AND WHEN SHE DOES, IS RATHER SHY TOWARD STRANGERS. TO FRIENDS, HOWEVER, SHE IS VERY HOSPITABLE AND CHARMING. SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH FLUENTLY.

4. MRS. S. RAJARATNAM, WIFE OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IS A HUNGARIAN WOMAN IN HER LATE 50'S LITTLE

IS KNOWN OF HER EARLY LIFE. SHE MET HER HUSBAND IN ENGLAND IN THE EARLY 1940'S WHEN HE WAS STUDYING LAW AND THEY MARRIED IN LONDON DURING WORLD WAR II. THEY HAVE NO CHILDREN. MRS. RJARATNAM HAS BEEN KNOWN TO COMPLAIN THAT HER HUSBAND LEADS FAR TOO BUSY A LIFE AS FOREIGN MINISTER AND SHE WOULD LIKE HIM TO SPEND MORE TIME AT HOME. SHE ONE SAID SHE IS GLAD THEY NEVER HAD CHILDREN BECAUSE OF THEIR BUSY LIFE CONNECTED WITH HIS POSITION. MRS. RAJARATNAM SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH, WITH A SLIGHT ACCENT, AND FRENCH. SHE IS A LIVELY, FRIENDLY TALKER ON A WIDE RANGE OF LIGHT SUBJECTS AND A VERY GOOD LISTENER.
HOLDRIDGE

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